

HB6305: An Act Concerning Implementation of the Sustinet Plan

Testimony of Patricia Baker, President & CEO, Connecticut Health Foundation

Insurance & Real Estate, Human Services, and Public Health Committees Joint Public Hearing
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Good afternoon, I am Patricia Baker, President & CEO of the Connecticut Health Foundation. I want to thank Rep. Betsy Ritter for inviting me to testify today.

The Connecticut Health Foundation's (CT Health) mission is to improve the health status and well-being of people in Connecticut, especially the un- and under-served. In fulfilling our mission, the foundation targets its resources to improve systems that interconnect with oral health, children's mental health, and racial and ethnic health disparities.

Connecticut's health care reform efforts can be attributed to a unique collaboration among technical experts, community stakeholders and philanthropy. I applaud the hard work of the 160 volunteers who served on Sustinet committees and work groups. I also want to commend the Foundation for Community Health, the Jessie B. Cox Trust, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, and the Connecticut Health Foundation's board of directors for supporting the early stages of health care reform.

Between 2009 and 2010 the Connecticut Health Foundation invested a total of \$380,000 to support the Sustinet Board's project management team and the expertise of Stan Dorn of the Urban Institute and Jonathan Gruber of MIT. With the help of both state and national experts and dedicated volunteers, the Sustinet Board crafted a guide for the legislature to transform Connecticut's health care system before others shape reform for us.

Our state also needs to transform inequities in health and health care that have plagued our state for decades. Do you want to represent a state where 49 percent of Latino fourth-graders experience significant oral health carries? Do you want children of color with mental health issues to receive care in the juvenile justice system or in their communities? If your answer is "no," then you must be committed to transforming our health care system now.

Connecticut's health care reform efforts can address these long-standing injustices, as well as improve health care quality and reduce costs only if health care delivery reforms are implemented. In our research and experience, the foundation believes the following reforms will create a better health care delivery system:

- A culturally- and linguistically-competent, patient-centered medical home
- Bundled payments and value-based purchasing to include the eventual development of accountable care organizations or ACOs

- Community-based, preventive care services with strong linkages to communities and neighborhoods
- Measurable health indicators and objectives to monitor the racial and ethnic health disparities over time
- Strong health information and data exchanges
- Evidence-based care
- Benefits that specifically address mental health parity and oral health
- Including those most affected to participate in the decision-making process

SustiNet's design supports a basic concept that greater numbers will provide a greater opportunity for impact. If you add up state employees and retirees and Medicaid recipients, more than 600,000 lives are covered. Plus much of the federally-supported health coverage expansion will add more un- or underinsured people onto Medicaid.

Health care reform efforts in Connecticut also must address and honor contracts, federal rules and guidelines. To be effective and fulfill the promise of reform, resources are needed to clarify and establish standards, as well as restore trust and accountability within the health care system.

CT Health believes the legislature has a unique opportunity to create a fair and equitable health care system before other interests influence the scope and depth of health care reform. Only you can ensure reform in Connecticut addresses access, quality, and cost while improving health outcomes of those who have been left behind.

You are facing a crossroads in history. You can lead our state in providing access to quality and cost-effective health care to thousands of people. I urge you to act now. The health and well-being of thousands of Connecticut residents depends on you to shape health care reform starting today.

Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.